

preferences. Is the Constitution being violated if schools allow religious symbols and forums within the school building?

#### SAFE SCHOOLS

(On behalf of Erin Gover and Beth Ziner)

Erin Gover: This morning I've chosen to talk about a pressing issue, which is educational safety. Lately there have been many occurrences throughout the country that have involved school shootings, most recently the Colorado incident. This topic hits a little too close to home, and if I were to sit here and talk about the many, many aspects of it, it would take valuable time that could be spent solving those problems, so I have chosen to focus on three main things, which are the weapons, the influences of this violence, and the effects of this violence.

First let's start off with the weaponry. Right now, there are a 192 million handguns in private possession. Think about that for a minute: 192 million. Now, they are not all legal, they don't all have permits. Most come from newspaper ads from, let's say, the Burlington Free Press. And it is not okay. In 1996, there were 9,390 murders involving handguns; in New Zealand, there were 2. What is the real difference between the United States and New Zealand? Sure, there's the distance factor. But are we really that different? They're the same people. And out of those 192 million handguns, there are 280 million people in the United States. That is over half, and that is including children. Where are these guns?

And the influences of this violence. The media is not the cause. We want to blame someone, and when I say "we," I mean the human race in general. We want a quick solution, but there really aren't any. We have been doing this for centuries. For example, Hitler and the Jews. He blamed the Jews because he could; that's all. And we are blaming the media for these shootings because we can and it's a quick solution. We need to open our eyes and we can see the warning signs. It goes back to the individual. The problem starts there.

And the effects of the violence. It is at Colchester High School, and it is not just Littleton, Colorado. It makes people wonder: Could it happen here? Because we have had—as Beth is going to speak about—gun threats and bomb threats, and what's next?

Solutions to these problems need to be done and need to be done now. There need to be stricter laws, harsher penalties. I don't care if the kid is 7 years old; he still brought a gun to school, and he needs to be made an example of so it doesn't happen again. There needs to be a town meeting or a public forum telling the community members about these warning signs. If parents are going to deny they are there, the need to know.

One source that I have heard of that had an idea is for students to pick a mentor that they felt comfortable talking to, even if things are good, or bad, even. But the point is, it's their choice, and there's comfort, and it solves the communication problem. Things need to be done so that Colchester, Vermont, doesn't become Littleton, Colorado.

Thank you.

Beth Ziner: The problem of gun and bomb threats needs to be recognized and dealt with in a better manner. For the threats appearing at Colchester High School, the school took the following actions. For the bomb threats, school was canceled, lockers were searched, metal detectors were placed in the

## EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

doors, armed police were stationed in the halls. When the gun threat happened, heightened security became an issue at the school. Everything was the same, except that the police were unarmed. An article from the Times Magazine states that in 1996, handguns were used to murder two people in New Zealand, 15 in Japan, 30 in Great Britain, 106 in Canada, 213 in Germany, and 9,390 in the United States. We have a problem, and it needs to be recognized.

The last issue I would like to present is the option of bringing together the state of Vermont. I feel we have had so much negativity in the past few months, something needs to be done. Perhaps a "Celebrate Life Week" in the state of Vermont, where there are parades, sales in stores, happenings in theaters, fireworks, and awards given out to people who have done something good in the community.

Thank you.

### HONORING JUDGE FRANK M. JOHNSON, JR.

#### HON. EARL F. HILLIARD

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, July 27, 1999*

Mr. HILLIARD. Mr. Speaker, we are a country of strong men united by great philosophies, yet we are divided by realities that built this country by stripping a people of their land in order to call it our own, and by enslaving another people to a lifelong labor of blood and sweat to build our homes.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today, on the brink of a new millennium, not to point out the immaculate flaws of our cherished American dream. Rather, I rise to salute, Judge Frank M. Johnson, Jr., a man who Time Magazine in 1967 deemed "one of the most important men in America" and whose life exemplifies the biblical statement "to whom much is given . . . much is required."

Judge Johnson is a man who dedicated more than four decades of his life to ensuring that no man be limited by separate facilities that inherently violate his right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. He is an American icon, a legendary Federal jurist from Alabama whose historic civil rights decisions forever shattered segregation in a "Jim Crow" South.

His monumental ruling striking down the Montgomery bus-segregation law as unconstitutional created a broad mandate for racial justice that eternally eliminated segregation in public schools and colleges, bathrooms, restaurants and other public facilities in Alabama and across the South.

Judge Johnson was an innovator and a crusader for all mankind who will be remembered eternally for giving true meaning to the word justice.

Today, I rise to honor Judge Johnson for helping to bring equality to the American Dream. I honor him for bringing justice to an inhumane system of law. I honor him like Martin Luther King, Jr., for allowing justice and righteousness to roll down like a mighty stream.

## TROUP HIGH SCHOOL CHARACTER EDUCATION PROGRAM

#### HON. BOB BARR

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, July 27, 1999*

Mr. BARR of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, all across America, there is a growing level of concern about a perceived culture of violence and apathy among many of our young people. In response, parents, teachers, students, and political leaders have been searching for ways to counteract these trends. I am pleased to report to the House of Representatives that one high school principal in my Congressional District is truly helping to provide a solution to this problem. That principal is Bill Parsons, and the school where he serves is Troup High School in LaGrange, Georgia.

Several years ago, Bill Parsons was working at West Point Elementary School in Troup County. At the time, he came to the realization disrespectful behavior is due, at least in part, to a lack of understanding among students about what it means to develop good character, and how having moral and courteous habits can help students lead better lives. For this reason, he instituted a character education program that resulted in a significant and immediate drop in disciplinary referrals.

Word about Principal Bill Parsons' work quickly spread, and his efforts became the model for similar character education programs across the southeast. In addition to speaking about his program across the country, Bill Parsons is now working to implement a similar program that brings parents, teachers, students, businesses, and community leaders together to hammer home the message: character really does count.

I salute Bill Parsons for his crusade to make building good character a part of every child's education. I urge my colleagues in the Congress to look to his example, and do everything we can to support efforts such as his.

## RECOGNIZING THE HMONG YOUTH FOUNDATION

#### HON. GEORGE RADANOVICH

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, July 27, 1999*

Mr. RADANOVICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Hmong Youth Foundation's Fourth Annual Summer Festival. This Festival is a successful answer in an effort to provide Hmong Youth, many of whom are challenged with language barriers, with opportunities to engage in fun, and educational activities.

The Foundation was organized to give Hmong Youth a place where students can congregate as colleagues holding common fears, hopes and goals. The primary objective is to give students opportunities to excel in academic pursuits and to award scholarships. Before awarding scholarships, a strong after school infrastructure must be developed to provide a learning center and good environment. Many of the students come from economically disadvantaged families due to the